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February 18, 2004

BY HAND AND E-MAIL

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW,
Washington D.C. 20554

>   **Re:**   *EX PARTE* **PRESENTATION** --*Telecommunications Relay Services And Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities*, **CC Docket No. 98-67, CG Docket No. 03-123**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On February 17, 2004, Paul Ludwick, Senior Product Manager for Sprint (via conference call), Michael Baer, Senior Program Manager for Sprint (via conference call) and the undersigned met with the following staff members of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB): Tom Chandler, Cheryl King, Greg Hlibok and Sean O'More. The meeting covered three topics.

First, Sprint reiterated its position set forth in comments in the above-referenced proceeding that the provision of translation services to TRS and VRS users, *e.g.,* English to Spanish, Spanish to English, ASL to Spanish, and Spanish to ASL, should be eligible for reimbursement from the Interstate TRS Fund. Sprint provided each staff member a handout (copy attached) detailing its position that the lack of funding prevents those in the Spanish-speaking community from receiving the same services that English speaking TRS/VRS users receive. Sprint also pointed out that 28 of the 32 states where Sprint is the relay provider have authorized Sprint to provide English/Spanish translation services for TRS users making intrastate calls.
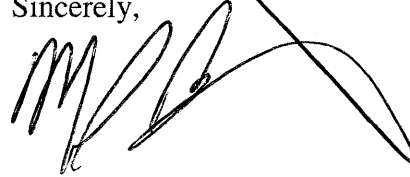
Second, Sprint discussed its provision of a new feature available to VRS users which enable such users to receive messages in ASL if they can not be reached by hearing callers and why such feature should be eligible to be reimbursed from the Interstate TRS Fund. A copy of Sprint's handout given to the CGB staff which explains this new feature is attached.

Third, Sprint discussed the problem that certain individuals may be making Internet relay calls from certain foreign locations to businesses in the United States for the purpose of buying large quantities of goods with credit cards that may have been stolen or are otherwise invalid. Sprint told the staff the steps that it was undertaking to try to mitigate this problem. A handout explaining this issue was given to the CGB staff and is attached hereto.

If you have any questions, please contact me.
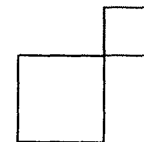
Sincerely,

Attachments

c: Tom Chandler, w/o attachments (by e-mail)
         Cheryl King, w/o attachments (by e-mail)
         Greg Hlibok, w/o attachments (by e-mail)
         Sean O'More, w/o attachments (by e-mail)

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Meeting with FCC

Bilingual Discussion

February 17, 2004

Issue Statement

Currently TRS providers are not reimbursed for providing Spanish to English translation for TRS or ASL to Spanish translation for VRS.

This is preventing the Hispanic community from receiving the same services using TRS that English-speaking users receive.

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Languages of the U.S.

- The top three utilized languages in the US, in order, are English, Spanish and ASL.

- ASL is not related to English, does not resemble English, and should not be considered a form of English. [1]

- The grammatical structure of ASL is different from that of English, and is actually closer to Japanese, although *"ASL is not the derivative of any oral language"* according to Rutherford. [2]

Visual Language of ASL

- The expectation that ASL should be word-based indicates a misunderstanding according to which spoken language is the only legitimate way to symbolize our conception of reality. [3]

- ASL is an independent language in which the signs directly represent concepts, not spoken English.

- The signs of ASL may be equivalent of the words in English OR Spanish (or any other language).

Recognition of ASL as a language

- FCC
  - Improved Rules of 2000 (FCC 00-56) allows CAs to "transliterate," or interpret, a caller's use of American sign Language, or ASL, to English. (¶43-46)
  - *Improved TRS Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 5148-51, 5154-55 permitted the cost recovery for ASL to English translation utilizing VRS (previously referred to as VRI).
- State
  - As of 1996, 16 states formally recognize ASL as a "foreign language" (including CA, FL, NY, TX).[4]
- Media
  - Univision produces a Spanish program in Los Angeles, CA that recognizes ASL and spoken Spanish as a mode of communication in the program (i.e., "Te Amare En Silencio").

Bicultural Communication

- ASL functions as a bridge in Spanish speaking households with Deaf or Hard of Hearing children.[6]
  - ASL is easier to learn outside of English syntax.
  - ASL is not tied to speech—ASL users may rely on English or Spanish as written and oral language.

- Native Spanish language in coordination with ASL is not supported in most Deaf schools.
  - Users must become trilingual to communicate with families in order to use written communication.
  - Much education is based on supporting the inclusion of two languages only (ASL and English).

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Census Information

Growing Hispanic Population

Year(s)	Hispanic Percentage of Deaf Population
1978-1979	9.4%
1988-1989	12.9%
1997	15%
1988-1989	20%
2001-2002	22.8%

- 83% of Deaf or Hard of Hearing children born to hearing parents.[5]
- Over 10% of Deaf or Hard of Hearing households speak and/or write in Spanish.[5]
- 9.1% report speaking more than one language.[5]

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Summary

To provide equal service to the Hispanic community, the FCC should:

- require that TRS providers provide Spanish to English translation for TRS, and

- permit and fund ASL to Spanish translation for VRS.

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References

1. Nakamura, Karen. "About American Sign Language." Deaf Resource Library. 28 Mar. 2002. 26 Dec. 2002.http://www.deaflibrary.org/asl.html, Vigoda, Ralph. "Colleges Argue over whether American Sign Language Counts as a Foreign Language." Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service. 8 Oct. 1993, Lucas, Ceil. "Location Variation in American Sign Language." Sign Language Studies. Washington DC: Gallaudet UP. 2.4 (2002): 407-40. Van Cleve, John V., Barry A. Crouch. A Place of Their Own: Creating the Deaf Community in America. Washington, DC: Gallaudet UP, 1995. Fromkin, Victoria A. "Sign Languages: Evidence for Language Universals and the Linguistic Capacity of the Human Brain." Academic Acceptance of American Sign Language. Ed. Sherman Wilcox. Burtonsville: Linstok P, 1992. 7-20. Selover, Peggy J. "American Sign Language in the High School System." Academic Acceptance of American Sign Language. Ed. Sherman Wilcox. Burtonsville: Linstok P, 1992. 153-62.

2. Rutherford, Susan D. "The Culture of American Deaf People." Academic Acceptance of American Sign Language. Ed. Sherman Wilcox. Burtonsville: Linstok P, 1992. 21-42.

3. http://facstaff.gallaudet.edu/harry.markowicz/asl/myth2.html

4. http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/infotogo/051ASL.html

5. http://gri.gallaudet.edu/Demographics/2002_National_Summary.pdf

6. Christensen, K.G. (1985). Conceptual Sign Language as a Bridge Between English and Spanish. American Annals of the Deaf,130(3), 244-249.
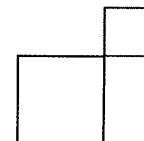
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Sprint VRS Mail

Video Mail

February 2004

Sprint VRS Mail

- New feature video mail became available December 19, 2003

- VRS Mail allows the users to receive messages in ASL if they can not be reached by the hearing callers

    - Instead of voice or text message, video clip in ASL is being recorded
    - Video mail message is sent to VRS user via email
    - Works just like voice mail where voice users receive notification that they have messages

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Sprint VRS Mail

- **To use VRS Mail- VRS Users**
  - First time user needs to register
  - User is assigned an extension number
  - User will receive notification of message via email
  - User will click on the attached file to play the message

- **To use VRS Mail- Voice Callers**
  - Call the toll free number with the VRS Mail extension number
  - If the VRS user is not available, the voice user will hear the VRS user's outgoing message
  - The caller will be asked to leave a message (which the VI will relay in ASL)
  - The caller will be asked to hold for confirmation of delivery of message

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Sprint VRS Mail

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Sprint VRS Mail

- Video Mail Rational

  - Telecommunications system does not support voice mail for Deaf/HOH users

  - Delivers a higher level of functional equivalency to VRS users

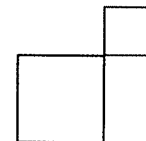 - Users can receive messages remotely- not restricted by access method (Broadband, ISDN, etc.)

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Sprint Relay Online
February 17, 2004

Issue Statement

Sprint believes that calls originating
internationally on the internet are being placed
through Internet Relay and terminating to
domestic businesses where the originator
attempts to perpetrate fraud, in many cases
using stolen credit card numbers.

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Description of Issue

Sprint estimates that these calls are in the range of 2 to 14% of our call volume

We cannot positively identify international calls based on IP address.

- The IP address that arrives at CA stations are not always identifiable as an originating IP address.

- IP addresses change as they go through routers, servers, and ISP providers.

Identification of calls is based on the content of conversation.

- We cannot act based on the content of conversation due to 100% confidentiality policy.

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Identifying 'suspected' Fraudulent Calls

- Criteria used to identify fraudulent calls:
    - The caller does not know the proper TTY protocol such as using 'GA'
    - The caller attempts to use a credit card that is repeatedly denied.
    - The caller attempts to make multiple calls as much as 5-10 calls
    - There are long delays in responding to the 'GA' sent by the operator.
    - The caller does not care about price or product itself, yet is ordering large quantities of merchandise.
    - The OB caller indicates that the call involves fraudulent activities.
    - The operator identifies the call through the conversation.

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Possible Solutions

- Disconnect international call during the call set-up, before the relay conversation begins.

- Disconnect international call during the conversation, within stringent guidelines.

- Use technology to block inbound international calls (Currently investigating).

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Sprint's Plans

- Short-Term

  - Inbound caller states to the operator they are calling from international point.

  - Disconnect call before relay conversation begins

- Mid-Term

  - Explore methods in reducing or eliminating the inbound international calls through the use of technology. Eliminate problem before the call is processed.

  - Explore the option for relay agent to identify the call while processing, and within the strictest of guidelines, terminate the call if the call is international.

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